1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

THE WASH-BASIN

A third supernatural element which must be in good condition if a Bella Coola is to prosper in life, is a *nusḵelusta*, wash-basin. In the land above, *Ałquntām* has a large one filled with water which, having been constructed by himself, is replete with power. When a child is born, a small part of this receptacle, with its contents, is reserved for him; the supernatural artisans choose the actual section, but it is *Ałquntām* who gives them the ability to do so. A fortunate man, whose ventures are successful and to whom goods are attracted, is said to have a good wash-basin; whereas the ill-luck of an unfortunate person is attributed, among other reasons, to the small size of his supernatural vessel. The Bella Coola have no clear ideas about the connection between an individual and his wash-basin. Some state that it remains in the land above; others believe that its intangible essence comes to a child at birth and grows up with him, always near his body, as if it were the offspring of the basin in the land above. As long as it remains in motion the owner continues in good health and prosperity, but if it becomes sluggish he falls ill. Long ago, shamans knew how to reanimate a wash-basin, but since the time of the first people, when supernatural ability was common, this has been a lost art. Senile decay is attributed to listlessness of this possession.

River water, being a creation of *Ałquntām*, is akin to the water in his basin above. Boys are always advised to bathe in the river at dawn; the act is termed *āsḵelusam*, a word connected with *nusḵelusta*. A prayer is uttered while washing. The combination of verbal appeal and the application of water strengthens the petitioner's wash-basin and so increases his chances for prosperity. Until a few years ago, this practice was almost universal. Water is always considered a strange substance, obviously a supernatural creation, and believed to be the chief means of sustenance for a child after being weaned.[86]

[86] This may be a mere rationalization.

6:Boas E-5 (1886-ca. 1890)1892
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

726 hair with white eagle-down. Warriors when on a war party must not
[714] drink more than four mouthfuls of water, else they would be killed. A
watchman was appointed in each canoe, who sat in the bow. On landing
[291] near the village of their enemies they divided themselves into a number
of parties, one house of the village being assigned to each. Then, early
in the morning, when all were asleep, they rushed up to the village utter-
ing their war cry 'wai!' They took a stand at the fire which burns
in the centre of the house, and if any one of the enemies succeeded in
taking up his arms and came out of his bedroom they killed him. Then
727 they entered the bedrooms, killed the men, and took the women and children
along as slaves. The heads of the dead were cut off, the houses burnt,
and they returned home singing war-songs. The heads which they had
taken along were then scalped, and the scalps tied to each end of a pole.
When they approached their village one man stood up in the bow of each
canoe and swang the pole to which the scalps were attached, and they all
sang songs, in which their deeds were recounted. The scalps were
valued the higher the longer and fuller the hair. They were used in the
Sisan'ku.

648 The following tales of war expeditions offer some points of interest.
726 About thirty or forty years ago there was a famine at Bella Coola. The
people went overland to Knight Inlet, which belongs to the Tenaqtaq, a
[731] tribe of the Kwakiutl, to fish there. The Tenaqtaq made fun of them,
took from them the fish they caught, tore the blankets from the backs of
the women, and seduced many of them. Finally the Bilqula returned
home. There they held a council and resolved to make war upon the
Tenaqtaq. The Tinneh joined them in this expedition. They crossed the
mountains in four days. When they approached Knight Inlet they sent
two spies in advance, who were to count the number of houses in the
village of the Tenaqtaq. Early in the morning they attacked the houses,
and killed a great many men. The Tenaqtaq could not escape, as they
were hemmed in by the river. The Bilqula slew them with knives,
lances, and stone axes. They took away the clothes of the women,
leaving them naked, and subjected them to shameful insults in revenge
for the disgrace put upon their wives and daughters. Then they burnt
the village.

About thirty-five years ago the Talio'mH were attacked by the
Kwakiutl. Originally they intended to attack Nuqa'lkH, but the raven,
according to the narrator, changed their mind, as he always protects the
village of Nuqa'lkH. They came in many canoes, while most of the
Talio'mH were at the lake, which is situated above that town, fishing.
Four men were in charge of the village, and a number of old men and
women had also remained at home. The father of Nusk'alu'sta, who told
me of these events, happened to be out picking berries, accompanied by
his wife. He saw the canoes passing by and kept himself hidden. The
[712] village of Talio was at that time surrounded by a strong stockade, which
consisted of a double row of palisades crowned with thorns. At each
corner there was a strong box fastened on the stockade like a tower.
Here watchmen were stationed, who were able to shoot at the enemy
while being themselves protected. At that time the Talio'mH had only
four guns. The Kwakiutl sent out two spies, who reported that the
village was well fortified. The Talio'mH had seen the canoes coming and
were on their guard. The Kwakiutl thought that they would not be
able to enter the village until after the stockade had been destroyed.